

YNTYMAK WEEK

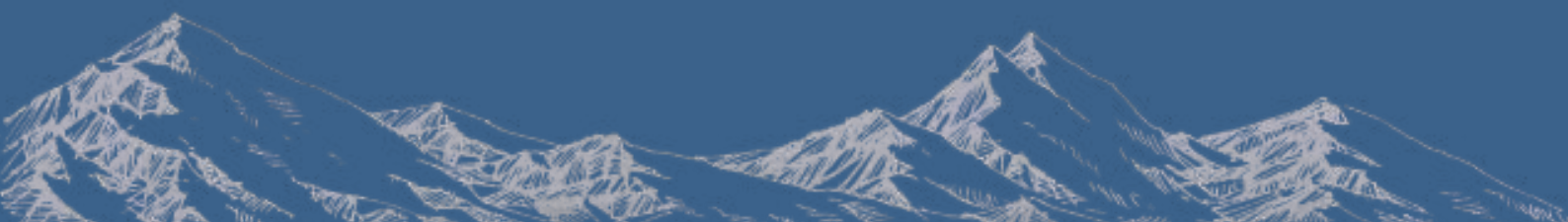
Yntymak Week Report 2025

The role of youth in civil society and peacebuilding



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Introduction

Yntymak Week is the flagship event of the Peacebuilding Hub held annually on the occasion of International Peace Day on the 21st of September. The Hub serves as an informal coalition of international organisations dedicated to fostering and promoting peace in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Peacebuilding Hub is composed of Acted, DVV International, PeaceNexus Foundation, Saferworld, Search for Common Ground, the UN Resident Coordinator Office in the Kyrgyz Republic, and UN Women Kyrgyzstan Country Office.

Yntymak Week is a platform where representatives from diverse sectors come together to reflect on challenges, best practices, and explore opportunities to strengthen peacebuilding efforts in the region. In 2025, the forum expanded to Uzbekistan as part of the first Fergana Peace Forum, reflecting the growing demand for regional dialogue and the forum's increasing recognition.

Diverse formats such as TEDx-style Yntymak Maek, panel discussions, art exhibitions, quiz nights, and “speed reflections,” helped transform the event from dialogue about youth into dialogue with youth.

In 2025, Yntymak Week took place across three locations: in Osh on 15–16 September, Bishkek on 17–19 September, and, for the first time, in Fergana, Uzbekistan, on the 16th October. The forum, which this year centered on youth, gathered more than 1,900 participants from civil society, youth groups, government officials, academia, business, and international partners to reflect, learn, and jointly explore solutions for peacebuilding and social cohesion.

This year also marked the first time the Yntymak Week has been organised in official partnership with state institutions like the National agency for religious affairs and interethnic relations under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (NARAIR), The National institute for strategic initiatives under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (NISI) in Kyrgyzstan, and the Institute for strategic and regional studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISRS) in Uzbekistan.

This report presents key insights, reflections, and emerging issues shaping youth engagement in peacebuilding, based on discussions held across Osh, Bishkek, and Fergana during Yntymak Week 2025.

Focus area of 2025: the role of youth in civil society and peacebuilding

Yntymak Week 2025 was held with a focus on youth and their role in strengthening peace and civil society. The goal was to place youth at the center of discussions, providing an inclusive space for young voices, and empowering the next generation of leaders and peacebuilders. This focus reflected recognition that young people represent the largest demographic group in Central Asia and therefore, play an increasingly influential role in shaping social, economic, political, and cultural developments in the region. In this view, young people's perspectives provide valuable insights into broader peace and development dynamics in Central Asia and how these dynamics can be better understood.

From the very beginning, the Hub has been guided by four thematic areas that serve to consolidate the efforts of both the Hub and its partners. These four thematic areas constitute the core pillars of all Yntymak Weeks held to date. They are as follows:

The four main thematic areas



**Effective Natural Resource Management and
Climate Change Adaptation**



Social Cohesion and Solidarity



Women empowerment for peace



Responsive and Effective Governance

The Opening Ceremony in Bishkek highlighted the topic of youth engagement, with speeches by two young keynote speakers: Alina Isakova, a founder of “Ak Turpak Group”, a rice processing and packaging company in Batken region that exports rice to Russia, Uzbekistan and the United States, and Nurzhigit Asanov, a public activist and advocate for youth projects, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and green economy in Kyrgyzstan. Alina Isakova, in particular, stressed the importance of access to information for meaningful youth participation. She elaborated that limited information in regional areas of Kyrgyzstan often prevents young people from accessing existing opportunities. From this perspective, dedicating Yntymak Week to youth becomes especially important.



Other speakers highlighted similar themes in their speeches: Anthony Fedorov, General Secretary of UN Youth of Finland, shared Finland’s own experience of implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) on YPS. He emphasised that meaningful progress cannot be achieved through the efforts of youth, civil society, organisations, or government alone; rather, progress requires collaborative action by all stakeholders.



Yntymak Week Promo Video, Opening Ceremony, Osh,
Yntymak Week 2025

The Opening Ceremony in Osh placed particular emphasis on meaningful cooperation between state institutions and civil society. Saltanat Amanova, Vice Mayor of Osh, noted that government agencies learn from the experience of civil society organisations, and emphasised the importance of such cooperation. The Opening Ceremony also included keynote remarks by representatives of civil society from across the Fergana Valley. For instance, Keneshbek Baratov, Head of the Public Association “Kulundu zhashtar ke neshi” in Batken, Kyrgyzstan; Khurshida Ibragimova, Director of the NGO “Mehrjon” in Fergana, Uzbekistan; and Munira Osimova, Project Manager at the NGO “Saodat” in Khujand, Tajikistan all provided practical insights from their cross-border peacebuilding and community initiatives.

In Fergana, Yntymak Day served as a platform to celebrate the region’s peace and unity. Also as confirmation of political actors’ goodwill, cementing their intention to work together and reinforcing the vision of peace in the region. This was underscored by Akramjon Nematov, First Deputy Director of ISRS, who noted that Central Asia has become an “example of turning a point of tension into a pillar of stability.” Eduards Stiprais, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, welcomed strong youth participation, emphasising that “today’s youth are tomorrow’s leaders” and stressing the importance of engaging youth in shaping the region’s future.



Akramjon Nematov,
First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan,
Fergana Peace Forum, Fergana, 2025

Yntymak Week 2025 Overview

A total of 26 panel and thematic sessions were conducted across three locations as well as 3 thematic side events, including Quiz Night games in Osh and Bishkek, two art exhibitions in Osh and Fergana, and one Yntymak Maek in Bishkek.

1 | OSH (15–16 September 2025)

Yntymak Week opened in Osh, where discussions naturally touched on the ground realities of border regions and cross-border cooperation. Over two days, more than 700 participants took part in 8 thematic sessions focused on women's empowerment for peace, youth-led cross-border dialogue, community resilience, and climate adaptation. Contributions from speakers and participants from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan again emphasised the importance of cross-border cooperation in the Fergana Valley. The forum was implemented in close partnership with the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations (NARAIR) and Osh State University.

2 | BISHKEK (17–19 September 2025)

In Bishkek, Yntymak Week addressed themes related to governance and digital peacebuilding. Held on September 17–19 at the Ololo Planet Coworking, the Bishkek program brought together 840 attendees across 12 thematic sessions. Key topics included countering polarization in digital spaces, civic identity and social cohesion, evidence-based programming, and inclusive implementation of youth policies. The event was implemented in close partnership with NARAIR, the official national partner of Yntymak Week 2025.

3 | FERGANA (16 October 2025)

Yntymak Day was implemented within the Fergana Peace Forum, hosted for the first time in Fergana, Uzbekistan, on the 16th of October 2025, under the theme “Fergana Valley: Uniting Efforts for Peace and Progress.” Yntymak Day featured six sessions, showcasing the Fergana Valley as one “single living organism” that requires collaborative cross-border solutions. More than 200 participants gathered on October 16th, including government officials, diplomats, civil society, experts, business community, youth organisations, and international organisation representatives from CIS, Europe, the US, and more. Key topics discussed included celebrating unity and peace in the region, the economic potential of the Fergana Valley, youth and women's civic participation, and transboundary natural resources management. The Forum marked an important moment for the region, representing Central Asian states' commitment to dialogue, openness, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange, leaving historical tensions behind. The forum concluded with a Communiqué, supported by participants, to create and sustain the unified space of friendship, harmony, and sustainable development in the Ferghana Valley. Yntymak Day was implemented in close partnership with ISRS, core partners of Yntymak Week 2025 in Uzbekistan.

Four thematic areas through the lense of youth

This year, Yntymak Week 2025 organised its discussions around four Key Driving Factors for peacebuilding, viewed through the lens of youth. Across sessions in Osh, Bishkek and Fergana, participants moved from describing challenges to proposing concrete, context-specific solutions.

1. **Social cohesion and solidarity**

Discussions under this theme centred on a single question: how can young people hold communities together at a time of rapid digital, generational and demographic change? Three threads ran through the sessions.

Advancing Peace through Digital Technologies

Participants agreed that digital tools are neither good nor bad for cohesion in young people, as the primary creators and users of online content, it can either strengthen solidarity or deepen division. Sessions surfaced strong awareness of AI, social media, cyberbullying and digital literacy gaps, alongside concerns about bias and the misuse of digital tools.

The consistent conclusion was that digital peacebuilding only works when paired with offline dialogue: building young people's digital resilience, and equipping them to produce engaging, accessible content, was identified as the practical priority. In "From Expertise to Audience," Evidence Central Asia illustrated the point from an unexpected angle — using film and creative interpretation to build the emotional intelligence and shared meaning that underpin cohesion.

Conditions for Youth Empowerment

Participants described generational difference as a resource rather than an obstacle but only when channelled through inclusive dialogue. Youth named short project cycles and limited continuity as concrete barriers to sustained youth engagement, pointing to a need for consistent involvement in decision-making rather than one-off consultation.

Trust, mentorship, and environments that balance the experience of older generations with the innovation of younger ones were seen as the conditions for genuine youth leadership. The National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations session on forming civic identity, and UN Women's "Dialogue of Generations," both showed how safe, structured spaces can turn generational tension into mutual learning.

Youth-led Cross-Border Cooperation

Marking the tenth anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda and Kyrgyzstan's endorsement of its first YPS National Action Plan in March 2025, the session "From Plans to Action" was co-organised by CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and IDEA Central Asia — compared how young people in Kyrgyzstan and Finland, among the world's first countries to develop YPS National Action Plans, shape, implement and monitor these frameworks. Participants used interactive "Action Roundtables" to co-create recommendations on inclusivity, intergenerational coalition-building and the safe use of digital tools.

In the border areas of the Fergana Valley, where cultural ties, natural resources and historical tensions intersect, youth participation was identified as an important factor in strengthening regional stability. Participants shared practical initiatives — Friendship and Culture Days, craft exhibitions, forum theatres, youth debates, and small grant schemes focused on economic empowerment, which were seen to build trust and mutual understanding across borders. The reopening of borders was noted as expanding opportunities for mobility and exchange, and young participants observed that the opportunity to take part in Yntymak Week was itself important in fostering cooperation and a common regional identity.

Sessions also addressed cohesion under pressure. IOM examined migration as a factor in social cohesion, while UNICEF shared its experience reintegrating children and women repatriated from conflict zones — work that depends on challenging stereotypes and addressing discrimination across families, schools and decision-makers.

Building on these experiences, state representatives proposed establishing an annual regional youth forum to institutionalise youth participation in regional dialogue, alongside national and regional networks of young peacebuilders, including a thematic track on water cooperation. Youth representatives also highlighted the need for stronger coordination among youth organisations to improve contribution for peacebuilding.

2. Effective natural resource management and climate change adaptation

Promoting Environmental Cooperation

Environmental cooperation was identified as a priority area with strong relevance for both regional stability and youth engagement. In Osh and Fergana, where communities depend on shared land and water resources, environmental challenges are tightly linked to livelihoods and social relations. As a result, environmental issues provide an entry point for cross-border cooperation: addressing transboundary problems through collective approaches builds trust and stability as a by-product.

Given that most of the region's water is used for agriculture, participants focused on practical mechanisms. They proposed small basin councils as a means of resolving water-related disputes at community level and strengthening cooperation between neighbouring districts. Drip and sprinkler irrigation were named as cost-effective solutions that raise crop yields while reducing pressure on shared water resources. FAO's session on natural resource management and climate adaptation set out a broader climate-smart agriculture toolkit — drought-resistant crops, efficient irrigation including water reservoirs, drip systems and artificial glaciers, and soil restoration — framed explicitly as measures that reduce resource-based tensions while strengthening community resilience and economic empowerment. ACTED's session on women and communities as drivers of water management, and Osh State University's session on sustainable development and environmental security, reinforced the same link between resource stewardship and stability.

Sessions in Fergana highlighted that young people and women are increasingly taking on leadership roles in these initiatives. Their contribution is twofold: they solve local problems through community initiatives, start-ups and participation in water management committees, and they build trust between neighbouring communities. Several panellists noted that trust rises markedly when women act as mediators, contributing directly to de-escalation and conflict prevention.

At the same time, participants were candid about the ceiling on this potential. Youth and women leaders continue to face difficulty accessing technical expertise and resources; while motivation and innovation are abundant, administrative and financial barriers limit impact and sustainability. The proposed responses were specific: simplify bureaucratic procedures and expand cross-border capacity-building so that youth- and women-led climate initiatives can scale.



3. Improving responsive and effective governance through inter-sectoral dialogue

Yntymak Week 2025 embodied a testament that effective peacebuilding requires coordinated efforts among state institutions, civil society, international partners and local communities, including youth and women. The forum itself was viewed as a positive example of growing openness to cross-sector dialogue at both national and regional levels. Within this context, participants emphasised successful engagement between institutions and civil society organisations as a foundation for sustainable peacebuilding.

The productivity of such cooperation, participants stressed, depends on the proactiveness of both sides. Open, two-way dialogue has been highlighted as the key condition for aligning priorities and achieving meaningful results. Participants also underlined the importance of strengthening cooperation at the local level by expanding support for local self-governance bodies and community-based initiatives, particularly those led by youth and women.

Civil society actors also reflected on their own role, noting that improved coordination and accountability within the NGO sector would enhance credibility and enable more effective dialogue with public institutions.

Concrete models were presented. The Roza Otunbayeva Initiative shared results from the “Blossoming Aigul” project, which was implemented with UN Women, FAO and the UN Peacebuilding Fund across municipalities in the Batken region, where seven community-led socio-economic development plans strengthened vertical trust between citizens and authorities and unlocked catalytic government financing. OHCHR’s “Creating a Human Rights City” session offered a framework for embedding human rights principles and digitalisation into local governance, while UNODC addressed crime prevention in border communities, and the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations examined the role of religious education and youth in building a peaceful society.



Private Sector Contributions in Advancing Peace

Participants supported the concept of a “single Fergana economic space” and proposed establishing a joint fund to finance cross-border initiatives. Such cooperation, they noted, strengthens local trust and confidence in the Valley. Discussions underscored that responsible business practices and deeper economic ties contribute to trust, connectivity and long-term stability. Participants cited infrastructure as evidence of growing confidence — Silk Road transport routes, energy and railway projects, and expanded links between Tashkent, Osh and Khujand — and stressed that borders should be viewed not as dividing lines but as points of connection supporting the region’s stability and prosperity.

The private sector’s contribution to peace was located in investment, job creation and the facilitation of cross-border cooperation, with opportunities identified in tourism, renewable energy, water management and manufacturing. Given the region’s large young population, participants emphasised that this potential is best realised through vocational training, social programmes and local supply chain development.

Looking ahead, participants reaffirmed that meaningful government–business–civil society collaboration is critical for sustainable development, and expressed readiness to continue working jointly on initiatives that address shared priorities and strengthen social cohesion.



4. Gender equality and women's empowerment

A Landmark Year for the Women's Agenda

2025 was a landmark year for gender equality in Kyrgyzstan, and Yntymak Week used the moment deliberately. UN Women's flagship session, "100 Years of Era-Changing Women," was anchored in a convergence of anniversaries: the 100th anniversary of Kyrgyzstan's women's movement, the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

These were not ceremonial markers but a live policy backdrop. The session foregrounded the national priorities set out in the country's Beijing+30 review: quality education and lifelong learning for women and girls; women's entrepreneurship; gender equality in climate resilience and environmental sustainability; elimination of violence against women and girls; and women's political participation.

"25 Stories, One Vision"

Rather than relying on statistics alone, the session made its case through people. The "25 Stories, One Vision" showcase presented twenty-five women peacebuilders from across the country, illustrating the breadth of women's roles in conflict prevention, social cohesion and community resilience, and using storytelling as a tool for healing, advocacy and policy influence. Deliberately intergenerational in design, the session connected the WPS and YPS agendas by asking how women and young people can lead together on climate, peace and inclusion, and gathered concrete recommendations intended to feed into the fifth WPS National Action Plan, the YPS National Action Plan and national gender policy.



Day 2 of Yntymak Week, Bishkek, 2025

Side events and engagement highlights



As part of Yntymak Week, participants also had the opportunity to attend several side events, including quiz games in Osh and Bishkek, art exhibitions in Osh and Fergana, which showcased the real stories of local communities, and Yntymak Maek (Discussion forum) in Bishkek. Interactive quiz competitions on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and Freedom of Expression were held in Osh and Bishkek. The events engaged youth, students, journalists, and civic activists in gamified formats to stimulate critical thinking and digital resilience. The quiz demonstrated that the most valuable aspect of MIL is not just theoretical knowledge but the ability to apply critical thinking in everyday life.



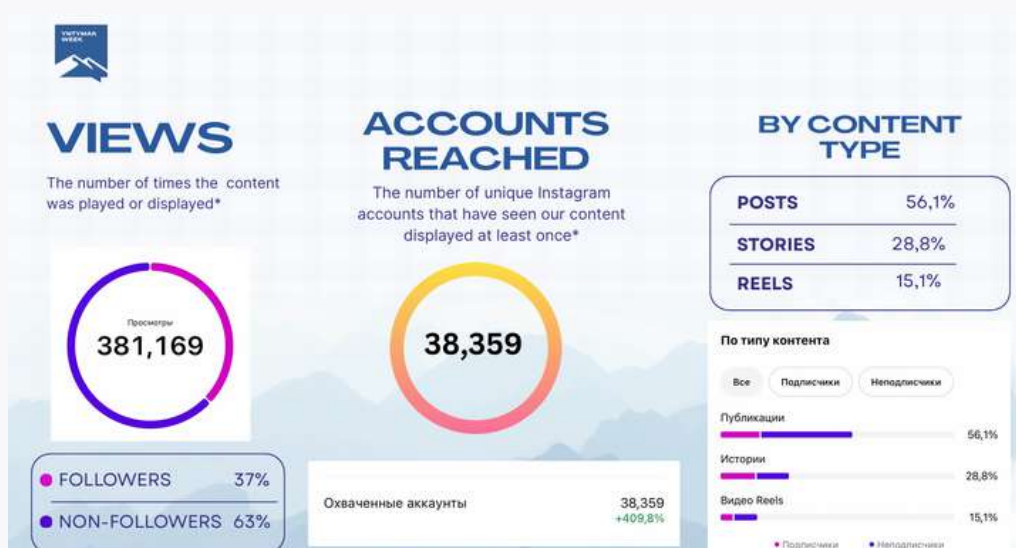
Side events and engagement highlights



In addition, art exhibitions were organized during the Yntymak Week in Osh and Fergana. The “Unity in Diversity” exhibition in Osh featured drawings and photographs dedicated to cross-border cooperation and peace in the Fergana Valley. Another photo exhibition, organised for two days in Fergana, included visual materials showcasing the progress and results of civil society initiatives implemented across the Fergana Valley. Both exhibitions illustrated how peacebuilding initiatives create positive impact in the daily lives of local communities. Another part of Yntymak Week, TEDx-style Yntymak Maek, was dedicated to “Hidden Heroes.” The event spotlighted actors who quietly contribute to peace and social cohesion and shared their personal life stories. Yntymak Maek demonstrated that empathy, unity, inclusion, and simple everyday actions can transform lives, encouraging participants to contribute within their own communities.

Engagement Highlights

We conduct annual measurements of Instagram audience engagement, and the 2025 results show that the engagement rate has increased compared to previous years.



General conclusions

Over the past years, Yntymak Week has evolved into a trusted platform where dialogue, reflection, and practical cooperation come together. The expansion to Uzbekistan further reaffirmed the forum's growing relevance at both national and regional levels.

The 3rd Yntymak Week was defined by the active and constructive contribution of youth. Across Osh, Bishkek, and Fergana, young participants actively shaped discussions by posing critical questions, sharing experiences, and proposing context-specific solutions. Discussions in Osh reflected on the ground realities of border regions, including youth engagement in environmental protection, cross-border cooperation, and inclusion of youth, women, and minority groups. In Bishkek, young participants contributed to discussions on social cohesion, digital governance, and youth-led peacebuilding through climate adaptation, capacity and resilience building efforts.

Discussions in Fergana added a valuable regional perspective, illustrating how young people can help strengthen cooperation and trust across borders through cultural, environmental, and community-driven initiatives.

At the same time, discussions also identified conditions that influence youth engagement. Young people emphasized the importance of sustained programming, open intergenerational dialogue, and opportunities for earlier involvement in decision-making processes.

To conclude, Yntymak Week 2025 served both as an achievement and a moment of transition. It confirmed the platform's relevance in a changing regional context and underscored the increasing leadership of youth in peacebuilding. At the same time, the forum outlined priorities for deepening youth participation and strengthening regional cooperation.

Looking forward, it is important to continue to strengthen Yntymak Week as a participatory, inclusive, and action-oriented platform. While Yntymak Week has matured into a credible and respected platform, the forum now needs to move toward a more strategic, curated, and impact-driven format.



KEY REFERENCE TO YW MATERIALS

Before and during Yntymak Week, the team has developed a wide range of materials, which it is pleased to share for further reference:



Yntymak Week
Instagram



Yntymak Week
Website

**YNTYMAK
WEEK**

